



“Just say no” is good advice to stop people from trying drugs.

But it does not help people who are substance dependent. Overcoming substance dependence requires that you recognize its power and accept the personal limitations that occur because of it. Many people accept the hold that substance dependence has over them when they enter treatment. But entering treatment is the first act of acceptance. It cannot be the only one. Recovery is an ongoing process of accepting that substance dependence is more powerful than you are.

Accepting that dependence on drugs has power over you means accepting that human beings have limits. Refusal to accept a substance use disorder is one of the biggest problems in staying drug free. This refusal to give in to treatment can lead to what is called “white-knuckle abstinence”—hanging on to abstinence desperately because you isolate yourself and refuse to accept help. Admitting that you have a problem and seeking help are not weaknesses. Does getting treatment for diabetes or a heart condition mean you are a weak-willed person?

Accepting the idea that you have a substance use disorder does not mean you cannot control your life. It means there are some things you cannot control. One of them is the use of drugs. If you continue to struggle with trying to control the disorder, you end up giving it more power.

There is a paradox in the recovery process. People who accept the reality of substance dependence to the greatest degree benefit the most in recovery. Those who do not fight with the idea that they have a substance use disorder are the ones who ultimately are most successful in recovery. The only way to win this fight is to surrender. The only way to be successful in recovery and get control of your problem is first to admit that it has control over you.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO “HIT BOTTOM” TO BEGIN RECOVERY.

I have a substance use disorder. Yes_____ No_____

I hope someday I can use again. Yes_____ No_____

I need to work on acceptance of _____